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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2108
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RUEHYN/AMEMBASSY SANAA IMMEDIATE 1727
RUEHDH/AMCONSUL DHAHRAN IMMEDIATE 0397
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C O N F I D E N T I A L RIYADH 001662

SIPDIS

NEA/ARP JHARRIS AND JBERNDT

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PREF](#) [SA](#)

SUBJECT: UNHCR ASKS SAG TO HELP RATHER THAN DEPORT IDPS
FLEEING

REF: A. 09 RIYADH 1494
[1](#)B. 09 RIYADH 1538
[1](#)C. 09 RIYADH 1593
[1](#)D. 09 RIYADH 1524
[1](#)E. 09 RIYADH 1558

Classified By: Deputy Chief of Mission Susan L. Ziadeh for reasons 1.4
(b) and (d).

SUMMARY

[1](#)1. (C) UNHCR Deputy Regional Representative Dr. Hamdi Bukhari informed Poloff that a third UNHCR cross-border relief convoy was temporarily halted until a joint "gap" assessment was completed by the International Red Crescent (IRCRC) and UNHCR. The IRCRC expressed concern over insufficient cooperation between the IRCRC and UNHCR, as well as the belief that the IRCRC was effectively handling the humanitarian situation in northern Yemen according to Bukhari. Turning its attention to within Saudi Arabia, Bukhari stated that the two main concerns of UNHCR-Riyadh were the forcible return of Yemeni IDPs and UNHCR's involvement with Saudi IDPs. Both issues have been addressed via official letters to the SAG although UNHCR has yet to receive a response according to Bukhari. End Summary.

INTERNATIONAL RED CRESCENT EXPRESSES CONCERN

[1](#)2. (C) In a November 17 meeting, Bukhari told Poloff that the International Red Crescent (IRCRC) expressed concern that UNHCR was not effectively coordinating cross-border humanitarian relief efforts in the northern Alp/Mandaba border region with the IRCRC which operates from within Yemen. According to Bukhari, the IRCRC believes that their organization has been providing sufficient humanitarian aid in this region. In response to the IRCRC's concerns, UNHCR will conduct a joint "gap" assessment with the IRCRC to see if there are any gaps in humanitarian aid in the northern Sa'ada region. Assessment results will indicate whether a third UNHCR cross-border relief convoy is necessary (Note: Although Bukhari indicated that the assessment should be completed within a week, in a recent discussion on December 19, Bukhari stated that the assessment had not yet been started due to IRCRC dragging its feet. End Note). Noting the growing number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in the region, Bukhari felt that the new gap assessment would confirm the need for additional UNHCR cross-border relief convoys (ref A and B).

UNHCR RE-SHIFTING FOCUS

13. (C) Bukhari stated that the regional UNHCR office in Riyadh was "re-shifting its attention back to Saudi Arabia." The forcible return of Yemeni IDPs and UNHCR's request for involvement with Saudi IDPs are the two main issues stated Bukhari (ref B). From Geneva headquarters, UNHCR officially requested the SAG's participation in a joint discussion to find a mutually acceptable solution to the issue of Yemeni IDPs seeking asylum in Saudi Arabia. UNHCR believes that the SAG should be doing more to protect Yemeni IDPs fleeing conflict zones rather than simply deporting them back to Yemen. UNHCR has also written to the SAG expressing their readiness and support in assisting the SAG with Saudi IDPs. According to Bukhari, part of UNHCR's motivation in working with the SAG on this issue is to acknowledge and applaud the efforts of the SAG in effectively providing for Saudi IDPs. Bukhari indicated that if Saudi IDPs were relocated permanently, UNHCR's expertise could benefit the SAG if utilized. As of December 19, the SAG had not responded to either of UNHCR's written requests according to Bukhari.

14. (C) Additionally, King Abdullah ordered that 10,000 new housing units be built for Saudi IDPs relocated from the Saudi-Yemen border due to the conflict. This order appears to confirm reports that the SAG intends to create a 10km "buffer" zone along the Saudi-Yemen border (ref C, D and E).
SMITH